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INTERNATIONAL

U.S. Urges Bar On Technology Sales to Soviets

Allies Asked to Restrict Civilian Goods Being Adapted by Military

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PARIS—The Reagan administration is stepping up its efforts to staunch what U.S. officials described as the "hemorrhage" of Western high technology to the Soviet Union.

Officials attending a meeting on sensitive trade with Communist nations said the U.S. was strongly urging its Western allies to agree to rigorous limits on the types of civilian technological goods that can be sold to the Soviet Union because of increasing evidence that these products are being adapted to military uses.

The charge that there has been a near flood of strategic microelectronics and other militarily useful equipment was made by American officials attending a two-day opening session of the Coordinating Committee on Export Controls, or Cocom, the secretive group that regulates the trade of major Western nations with the Communist world. The officials requested anonymity.

Recent evidence points to a "large-scale leakage of this technology to the East," in part because of Soviet espionage and partly because of "gaping holes in the Cocom structure," according to the U.S. officials.

While these charges have been voiced before, the U.S. officials said there is new evidence of a "staggering" Soviet program to acquire Western technology which, they said, has already been adapted for "in excess of 150 Soviet weapons systems."

A Staff of 20,000

The officials spoke of an organization of some 20,000 trained Soviet personnel that analyzes Western high technology, plans operations to obtain strategic products and overcomes any difficulties to acquire the products from the U.S., Japan and Europe.

The Soviet Union has embarked upon an enormous new drive to obtain a vast range of Western technology, based upon the efforts of thousands of people within and outside the Soviet Union, according to one of the American officials. "It has all of us (in the U.S. government) very concerned and it has some of our allies very concerned," he said.

While the consensus is that the West must tighten its controls on high-technology sales to the Soviet Union, according to the officials, the extent and degree of any new restrictions will be the focus of negotiations over the next seven to 12 months.

Japan, France, West Germany and most other Cocom members—the 14 countries of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, excluding Iceland—have generally favored a more liberal approach on technology sales than the U.S. is advocating.

French sources have noted, for instance, that the U.S. apparently wants to ban the sale of everything but grain to the Soviet Union—a reference to continuing American wheat sales at the same time the Reagan administration has imposed sanctions in an effort to block the Soviet natural gas pipeline to Western Europe.

Shoe Factory Analogy

Even a Western shoe factory sold to the Russians could have strategic implications, they note, since it could ease pressures on the civilian economy and thus facilitate continued buildup of the military machine.

The American officials said, however, that the U.S. doesn't seek any such wide-ranging ban on trade. Nor is the U.S. offering to lift the controversial pipeline embargo in exchange for a tightening of the Cocom rules, they said.

The principal U.S. aim is to stop the Soviets from obtaining the latest Western civilian technology—and, in some instances, improving it—for military purposes.

The U.S. seeks to restrict the sale of a wide variety of materials and products ranging from silicon and microelectronics to robots and special alloys. In addition to new bans on sales of products whose military application has only recently come to light, the U.S. also wants tighter regulation of present Cocom rules and better coordination of information about Soviet activities aimed at acquiring such products.

Committee's Expansion Sought

The U.S. also wants the informal Cocom structure expanded into a body that could monitor and regulate the flow of Western high technology to the Soviet Union. "We think the institution is under nourished," said one of the officials.

Whatever the outcome of the negotiations with the allies, the U.S. believes the Soviet Union already has been able to narrow the high-technology lead the west enjoyed until recently, and is adapting Western equipment to military purposes faster than the U.S. and its allies.

The essential argument, according to the U.S. negotiators, is how to balance the economic gain from a \$2 million ball-bearing plant sold to the Soviet Union against the cost of a \$20 billion antimissile system eventually required to defend the seller against missiles built with the Western technology.